



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON

**Message from the Secretary of Defense**

Welcome to the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Department of Defense Disability Awards Ceremony. Today's ceremony honors our outstanding Service members and civilians with disabilities for their dedicated service to the Department and the Nation, and recognizes exemplary Department of Defense components for their efforts to strengthen a diverse and inclusive workforce.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, a time to celebrate the skills and talents that our Service members and civilians with disabilities bring to the Department of Defense. Their hard work, courage, and sacrifices strengthen our Department, our Total Force, and our Nation.

Our Nation's disability civil rights laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act, empowered millions of Americans to live, work, travel, and to participate fully in society. In order to advance the spirit of the law and fully embody the values we defend, we must remain steadfast in our commitment to attaining the goal that individuals with targeted disabilities comprise two percent of the Department of Defense workforce. Attaining and ultimately exceeding this goal is a major priority for the Department.

I am grateful for the service of the individuals and components that we recognize today as we all rededicate ourselves to recruiting, retaining, and advancing a modern workforce. I am proud of all who came forward to serve our country, and grateful for the service of all of our Service members and civilians with disabilities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ash Carter".